

Press Release

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U.S. Congressional Delegation Looks at Impact of American-Ethiopian Development Cooperation

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, August 27, 2015 – Earlier this week, an eight member congressional delegation visited Ethiopia. The delegation consisted of Senators Chris Coons, Jeff Merkley and Al Franken and Representatives David Cicilline, Joseph P. Kennedy, Betty McCollum, Terri A. Sewell and Kay Granger. While in Ethiopia the Members visited U.S. development assistance project partner sites, held a roundtable discussion with Ethiopian Civil Society members and met with the African Union Chairperson, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

On Sunday, the Members visited Sun Transfer Tech where they learned from the Managing Director about how a grant from the U.S. Government's Power Africa, Off-Grid Energy Challenge is helping his company to bring solar power to rural households in Ethiopia. During the rest of the day, the Members split into two groups. One group visited Mama Fresh Injera, which investments from members of RENEW's Global Impact Angel Network to open a new facility which allowed them to triple production and increase exports of fresh-baked injera, a staple bread of Ethiopian cuisine made from teff (a gluten-free grain) to U.S. and European markets. The group then proceeded to the Pioneer Seed Processing facility in Menagasha to learn about how more resilient hybrid corn seeds are helping Ethiopian farmers to more than triple their yields. DuPont partners with USAID and the Government of Ethiopia on the Advanced Maize Seed Adoption Program to provide sample seed on demonstration plots and field training sessions to show farmers how to best use fertilizer and improved production techniques to grow better crops. The visits provided the Members with the opportunity to see firsthand how the President's Feed the Future initiative is increasing agricultural productivity and generating opportunities for economic growth and trade.

The other group of Members travelled to the Wara Health Post and a model household, both located in Aleltu Woreda in North Shoa Zone of Oromiya Regional State. During the visit, the Members learned how Health Posts fit into the larger primary health care system and the woreda Primary Health Care Units and how the entire health "eco-system", which the U.S. Government has been supporting since 2008, is helping to bring drastic improvements in health care for Ethiopians throughout the country. At the model household, the group was able to witness how the Government of Ethiopia's Health Extension Education Program, which focuses on raising awareness about healthy practices in areas like maternal and child health, nutrition, family planning, water and sanitation, works with individual households to serve as models for their community. The group then visited the IOM offices in Addis Ababa to discuss how international partners are working with the Government of Ethiopia to find solutions for accommodating the large influx of refugees coming to Ethiopia from neighboring countries.

During the visit, Members paid their respects at a commemoration for Congressman Mickey Leland and other U.S. Government personnel who died in a plane crash in Gambella, Ethiopia in 1989. The delegation also held roundtable discussions with Ethiopian Civil Society leaders and with partners engaged in providing humanitarian assistance.

“Food insecurity has a crippling effect on communities in the developing world, and a heartbreaking impact on families,” said Senator Coons. “We need to strengthen programs like Feed the Future that build partnerships between the government and the private sector to empower people with the knowledge and skills to feed their local communities. I’m thrilled see the significant progress this program has made in helping Ethiopia improve the quality and resilience of its corn seed so Ethiopian farmers can feed more people and improve their livelihood.”

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